

Koutroulou Magoula Project

Archaeology and archaeological ethnography at Neo Monastiri, Central Greece: From the Neolithic to the present.

This project is centred around the excavation of the Middle Neolithic (c. 5800-5300 BC) tell site of Koutroulou Magoula, at Neo Monastiri, Fthiotida, Central Greece (c. 250 Km north of Athens). Around this excavation, a range of other projects of archaeological and ethnographic nature are being conducted. The tell site itself is a large, finds-rich and important settlement, which was first excavated solely by the Greek Archaeological Service. Since 2009, the University of Southampton collaborates with the Archaeological Service in continuing the excavation, and in introducing a range of other projects. The preliminary excavations and geophysical survey have already revealed the presence of a number of large, stone-built houses, some with paved floors, which were built and rebuilt on the very same spot, over several generations. Amongst the finds are plain and decorated pottery, stone and bone tools, figurines, animal and plant remains, human bones, and so on. The site is particularly rich in clay figurines (more than 200 to date), some anthropomorphic and some human-animal hybrids. A large, rectangular building excavated during the 2009-2010 seasons seems to have been deliberately destroyed. An intact human burial was excavated in 2011, and further burials within the settlement and between the houses are likely. In January 2012 we carried out a new geophysical survey which revealed the existence of many more houses and some perimeter features, most probably ditches or surrounding walls.

Alongside survey, excavation, and find analysis, we carry out archaeological ethnography, and a range of public and community archaeology actions. In 2011 we staged a very successful site-specific theatrical performance next to the trenches, which was attended by c. 300 local people and ended up with a feast, including music and dance.

The broad aims of this project are:

- To understand the material and social life of a Middle Neolithic community, through the recovery and detailed study of artefacts and objects, animal and plant remains, soil, sediments and other geo-archaeological data.
- To study the embodied and sensory ways through which this community produced material memory, time and temporality, in other words its corporeal mode of social production and reproduction.
- To situate this community in the broader social and physical landscape, and compare its mode of material engagement with the world with other communities nearby.
- To study and understand the role and the meaning of the material archaeological past and of archaeological activities and practices, amongst the modern communities of the area



through an in-depth and detailed archaeological ethnography project.

In 2012 we will complete the excavation of buildings uncovered in 2011, we will look for more human burials, and we will explore the perimeter features. We will take samples for dating, soil micro-morphology, and for organic residue analysis. We will continue the ethnographic work with more interviews with local people, and more public and community archaeology actions, and we will explore the possibility of repeating the theatrical happening on site, at the end of the season.

Tasks: Students will have the opportunity to participate in digging and recording features, drawing, topographic survey of the tell using a robotic Total Station, dry-sieving, sampling for C14, soil-micromorphology and organic residues, water flotation, processing and preparation of the excavated material for study, preliminary sorting of finds, and in archaeological ethnography methods and techniques. They will also have the chance to interact with all specialists, archaeologists and anthropologists, on site. We will also have excursions to see other sites in the area, and visit the seaside port-city of Volos, which hosts the most important museum in Greece for the Neolithic period.

Logistics: The dig will take place in September of 2012 and it last for four weeks. We will fly to Athens and make our way by minibus and cars to Neo Monastiri (c. 3-3.30 hours, with a break). Accommodation will be on shared basis in local houses (bed and breakfast) in the town of Neo Monastiri, and all meals will be provided, except when we are away on excursions and days off. We work five days a weeks, although towards the end of the season we may have to work during the weekend as well. All essential facilities from cafes (with wi-fi) to banks can be found in the town. Work on site will start at 7.30 am and finish at 2.30 pm. Workmen will be employed on site, especially for the heavy tasks, but students will be also involved in digging. We will have lunch as a team, and then siesta until 5 pm. From 5 to 7.30 we will work in the field lab, processing the finds of the day, and holding informal seminars and discussions.